

# Actor Stan Houston Hits Home Base In “Selma” Opposite Oprah in Defining Role as Sheriff Jim Clark



Photo from left to right top row, Selma cast: Charles Black, Kenny Cooper, Tara Ochs, Montrel Miller and Corey Reynolds; kneeling, actor Stan Houston as Sheriff Jim Clark

Atlanta – Every actor dreams of that career-defining role, the one that lands him in a blockbuster film alongside big Hollywood stars. Well when actor Stan Houston was initially offered his ‘big break’ to read for the role of the racist antagonist Sheriff Jim Clark in the now Oscar nominated film, “Selma,” he actually turned it down twice, and with good reason. Distributed by Paramount Pictures, Selma is a historical period piece that covers a critical episode in the civil rights movement. As a resident of Coffee County in the Southeastern area of Alabama, Houston actually lives in the same small town where Sheriff James G. Clark lived and died. Houston felt the dynamics of playing such a controversial role might just be too close to home. He eventually read for the role, and in a move showcasing director Ava DuVernay’s dedication to authenticity, he was selected.

Houston has been acting professionally for six years now. “Selma” is his most significant booking to date. His larger than life portrayal of Sheriff Clark has garnered him international attention and acclaim. Performing directly alongside Oprah Winfrey, who plays civil rights activist Annie Lee Cooper, Houston’s fiery, mean and unapologetic stance as Clark has left audiences stunned in hushed awe.

One of the film's most riveting reenactments is the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" demonstration, where police viciously attacked over 500 non-violent protestors with teargas and barbed wire laced billy clubs, under direct orders from Sheriff Clark. Houston's cold-blooded portrayal has even garnered him a nod from AwardsCircuit.com at "Best Villain" of 2014.

As predicted however, his superb acting and rendition of the legendary sheriff has been a mixed bag of blessings. While the world is lauding his acting ability, accomplishments and feats, some of his neighboring town folk are less than happy.



Actor,           Stan  
Houston

"There have been a few negative comments from people here locally where I live but I tend to ignore the ignorance of some people who should know better. Overall things have been great!" expresses Houston. "Playing Sheriff Clark was emotionally and physically taxing. I would not dare stay in character after the director said cut because I would have gone nuts."

"I was still holding on to my reservations playing Clark until one life changing moment," he reveals. "We were rehearsing the courthouse scene for the first time before we went to set. It was the first time the cast had seen me in character as Clark. I look over and saw some of the cast crying. I lost it. Ava DuVernay, our director, came over and gave me words of encouragement and we continued on. After rehearsals, all the cast gathered in a circle for a word of prayer. Actor Coleman Domingo prayed for God to lift me up and give me strength to play this role. I really lost it then. Each cast member lined up and embraced me and gave me such support. You really felt the presence of God in that room that day and all the love just flowed over me. I was 100 % committed to the role after that moment. I knew I had the cast as my family there to

support me.”

Houston began his acting career in 2008 and has appeared in numerous independent projects as well as projects for HBO and the FX Network, including the HBO comedy series “Eastbound and Down.” His most recent role was playing detective Donald Bray in the story of the West Memphis Three in “Devils Knot,” working alongside of Colin Firth, Reese Witherspoon and Stephen Moyer. He appears in “A Free Bird” on Hulu and Amazon and just finished filming, “South of Hell,” a new gothic drama coming to WEtv later this year.

“It is such an honor and to be a part of ‘Selma.’ My wife is also actually a friend of some friends of Annie Lee Cooper’s family, the role played by Oprah. So participating in the production really just hit home for me on so many levels. I believe the viewing of ‘Selma’ is necessary for all of us to realize what these brave American patriots did for everybody, not just one race. Without their struggles, where would we all be today? It is important to realize where we’ve been, how far we’ve come and how much further we need to go as a country. Working with Oprah was unbelievable, and in my eyes, our director, Ava DuVernay is a genius. She has tapped the heart of this country with this film. My character was a pretty bad guy, but I’m happy to have been such a visceral part of the movie. Hopefully I opened some eyes and helped to bring about change!”